



Village Theatre Announces Show Titles Selected for Festival of New Musicals

The 21st Annual Festival Takes Place August 2-4, 2024 in Issaquah

SEATTLE, WA (July 9, 2024) – Village Theatre is thrilled to welcome back the nationally renowned **Festival of New Musicals**, August 2-4, in Issaquah, Wash. Now in its 21st year, this theatrically packed weekend brings together the nation’s brightest musical theatre writers and provides Seattle area theatre-lovers with the rare opportunity to see first-hand how a new musical comes to life. And for the first time ever, the Festival of New Musicals is completely free and open to the public.

This year’s selected shows are:

The Oscar Micheaux Project

Cinematic pioneer Oscar Micheaux’s legacy as Hollywood’s first Black filmmaker comes to syncopated and soulful life in this tuneful and historic new jazz musical.

Music by Alphonso Horne, Lyrics by Jesse L. Kearney, Jr. & Peter Mills, Book by Jesse L. Kearney, Jr. & Cara Reichel with Additional Music by Peter Mills

Wakeman

This incredible true story of American Civil War soldier Rosetta Wakeman — who dressed as a man to fight for the Union army — chronicles her heroic journey with a thrilling modern-folk-rock-meets-Americana score.

Music, Lyrics, and Book by Jenn Grinels

We Ain’t Ever Gonna Break Up: The Hymon & Parfunkel Musical

A zany, laugh-out-loud jukebox musical about — and featuring the songs of — a band that never existed, with a hilarious score spoofing your favorite 60s-70s folk artists.

Book, Music, and Lyrics by Gregg Hammer & Louis Pardo, Developed with and Directed by Scott Weinstein (Previously developed at Phoenix Theatre and Chance Theatre)

And Sometimes... Love

While working in France, a Latina empty-nester experiences romance for the first time with a man she’s just met — her passionate Italian lover, many years her junior — in this intimate true story.

Music & Lyrics by Michael Mott, Book by Gretchen Suárez-Peña, Inspired by the true story A Love Not Meant For Me by Aryana Rose

“The future of musical theater is being written at Village Theatre,” says **Artistic Director Adam Immerwahr**. “For over 40 years, Village has been committed to nurturing, growing, and cultivating new musicals. The musicals we have selected this year are epic, inspiring, hilarious, and sweeping — and this year’s Festival promises to be a source of enormous inspiration for our artists and audiences alike. I can’t wait for our community to experience them.”

Village Originals has launched more than 180 new musicals into the universe, sending them across the country, to Broadway, and worldwide, and jumpstarting beloved hits like *Million Dollar Quartet* and the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Next to Normal*.

“The Festival is an incredible opportunity for creative teams to go to what we call ‘musical theatre summer camp’ for a week of writing, experimenting, and dreaming, working shoulder-to-shoulder with other writing teams in what might otherwise be a lonely process,” says **Associate Artistic Director Brandon Ivie**. “Bringing artists together is part of the joy of the Festival. We have a fantastic mix of both up-and-coming talent alongside well-established titans of the field all working side-by-side on the same goal: to create the next, great American musical. Add a company of local theatre artists and musicians bringing these stage readings to life, and you’ve got the new musical madness that is the Festival of New Musicals.”

This year, for the first time in the Festival’s 20-year history, Village Theatre has made admission to the Festival completely free in the hope that this new initiative will enrich the development process for artists and allow all audience members to celebrate new musical theater writing.

Limited seats are available for donors of \$1,000 or more to support the Village Originals new works program and gain access to a host of private panel discussions and behind-the-scenes Festival events with artists. More information is at VillageTheatre.org/Festival.

This project is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.

2024 FESTIVAL SHOW INFORMATION

The Oscar Micheaux Project

FRIDAY, AUGUST 2, 8:00 p.m.

Music by **Alphonso Horne**

Lyrics by **Jesse L. Kearney, Jr. & Peter Mills**

Book by **Jesse L. Kearney, Jr. & Cara Reichel**

Additional Music **Peter Mills**

Directed by **Kimille Howard**

Originally commissioned and developed by NYC’s Prospect Theater Company.

Developmental support from the National Alliance for Musical Theatre and The Johnny Mercer Writers Grove at Goodspeed Musicals.

From silent pictures to the talkies, groundbreaking cinematic pioneer Oscar Micheaux battles the racism of Hollywood to bring Black stories to the silver screen... facing down censorship boards, financial ruin, and family betrayal. Micheaux’s legacy as America’s first major Black filmmaker comes to syncopated and soulful life in this tuneful and historic new jazz musical.

Alphonso Horne (Music) is a composer, performer, and educator. He is a two-time Grammy-nominated trumpeter and has performed with renowned artists including Michael Feinstein, Alan Cumming, and Rihanna. Broadway: Orchestra for *After Midnight* and *Shuffle Along*. City Center Encores: *Pal Joey* and *Jelly's Last Jam*. He wrote and produced *Mother Kofi: The Tale of an African Princess* inspired by his family history. Florida State University (BM), The Juilliard School (MM). alphonsohorne.com

Jesse L. Kearney, Jr. (Book) is an award-winning playwright who received a Jonathan Larson Musical Theater Fellowship from the Dramatist Guild, among other honors. His musical *The Little Playhouse* for which he wrote book, music, and lyrics was workshopped at Lincoln Center Theater Director's Lab. Other projects include book and lyrics: *The Lion In Love* (music: Brian Feinstein) and libretto for *The Blind Man* (lyrics: Peter Mills, music: Deborah Abramson). MFA NYU Musical Theater Writing Program, BA Dartmouth.

Peter Mills (Additional Music) wrote lyrics, music, and co-book for the hit Off-Broadway musical, *The Hello Girls*. As a composer/lyricist, his other shows include *Illyria*, *The Flood*, *The Underclassman*, and *Golden Boy Of The Blue Ridge*. Mills also wrote lyrics for *The Honeymooners* (Paper Mill Playhouse) and *Iron Curtain*. Awards: Kleban Prize for lyrics, Fred Ebb Award, Cole Porter Award, Richard Rodgers New Horizons Award. MFA: NYU Musical Theater Writing Program. PeteMillsMusic.com

Cara Reichel (Book) is a writer and director who has collaborated to create over a dozen original musicals including *The Hello Girls*, *The Flood*, *Illyria*, *The Underclassman*, and others. For Theatrical Rights Worldwide, she wrote *The Olympians: A New Muse-ical*, a female-forward jukebox show. Recently, she created a new theatrical adaptation of Alan Lightman's novel "*Mr g: a novel about the Creation.*" She is the Producing Artistic Director of NYC's Prospect Theater Company. CaraReichel.com

Wakeman

SATURDAY, AUGUST 3, 2:00 p.m.

Music, Lyrics, and Book by **Jenn Grinels**

Wakeman is a new folk-rock/Americana musical by Jenn Grinels, currently making waves and being developed in New York City. Inspired by the incredible true story of American Civil War Soldier, Sarah Rosetta Wakeman (alias Lyons Wakeman), this story is sure to thrill both music and theater lovers alike. With powerful melodies, tight harmonies, and a beautiful yet heartbreaking score, *Wakeman* examines a young life filled with longing, passion, and searching for a place of belonging in the world.

Jenn Grinels (Music, Lyrics, and Book) is an award-winning singer/songwriter, but began her career in theater, performing in productions in California after studying at UC Irvine. With the release of her first album, Grinels hit the road, performing nearly 1,500 concerts and building a large grassroots following. With *Wakeman*, Grinels returns to her musical theater roots: in 2024 she was a finalist for the Kleban Prize in Lyrics and named Artist in Residence at Circle in the Square Theater School in NYC.

We Ain't Ever Gonna Break Up: The Hymon & Parfunkel Musical

SATURDAY, AUGUST 3, 8:00 p.m.

Book, Music, and Lyrics by **Gregg Hammer & Louis Pardo**

Developed with and Directed by **Scott Weinstein**

(Previously developed at Phoenix Theatre and Chance Theatre)

We Ain't Ever Gonna Break Up: The Hymon & Parfunkel Musical is the first jukebox musical about, and featuring the songs of, a band that never existed. This original two-man folk musical parodies the tired tropes of jukebox musicals like *Jersey Boys*, *Beautiful*, *Ain't Too Proud*, *Tina*, *Mamma Mia*, *The Cher Show*... and the 12 inevitable "new" bio musicals coming soon. Saul Hymon & Bart Parfunkel "star" in their own musical, playing themselves and the dozens of other characters they meet along the way, creating a uniquely virtuosic musical farce about brotherhood, partnership and the power of collaboration... if they don't break up first.

Gregg Hammer (Book/Music/Lyrics, Hymon) A native of nearby Bothell, Wash., Hammer's poignant storytelling and melodies often remind audiences of the golden era of singer-songwriters. As an actor/musician, Gregg has toured over 50 countries while performing in several hit musicals including *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Million Dollar Quartet*, and *Burn the Floor*. He has performed at The Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall, Greek Theater, Hollywood Bowl, and his voice can also be heard on attractions at Disney World. Instagram: @gregghammer

Louis Pardo (Book/Music/Lyrics, Parfunkel) Louis is a Grammy Nominated Mexican/Italian American performer, songwriter, and playwright. Pardo writes to explore the painful truths, the mechanics of bliss, and the irreverence of life. He was one of the kids who listened to every new cast album. Louis has performed in regional houses across the country and in venues such as the Laurie M. Davies Hall, Joe's Pub, The Hollywood Bowl, and South Coast Repertory. Instagram: @louis.pardo

And Sometimes... Love

SUNDAY, AUGUST 4, 2:00 p.m.

Music & Lyrics by Michael Mott

Book by Gretchen Suárez-Peña

Inspired by the true story *A Love Not Meant For Me* by Aryana Rose

And Sometimes... Love is an original musical inspired by the life of Aryana Rose, whose story went viral in 2017. Aryana: in her 40s, single, and the mother of grown children, has yet to experience romantic love. The Universe conspires in her favor guiding her to Gianluca, a charismatic and passionate artist, though many years her junior. Falling deeply in love, Aryana and Gianluca navigate romance, sex, life, and how a relationship must ultimately change. *And Sometimes... Love* is a breathtaking once-in-a-lifetime romance musical.

Michael Mott is an internationally award-winning composer and lyricist with over 15 million streams to his name. Heralded one of Playbill's "Contemporary Musical Theatre Songwriters You Should Know" and winner of BroadwayWorld's 2020 Cabaret Award. Original musicals: *In The Light*, *A Faustian Tale*, and *Mob Wife*, *A Mafia Comedy*. Discography: *Where The Sky Ends*, *Abandoned Heart*. Mr. Mott is an Advanced Member of the BMI Musical Theatre Writer's Workshop and a proud Dramatists Guild member. MichaelMott.net.

Gretchen Suárez-Peña is a Puerto Rican playwright with an MFA in Dramatic Writing from Carnegie Mellon University (2024), a board member of Conch Shell Productions (NYC), an Assistant Professor at Florida Atlantic University, and a proud Dramatist Guild member. Awards and Recognitions: Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival, Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, Tampa Bay Theatre Festival, Voices of Women Theatre Festival, Downtown Urban Arts Festival, Straz Center, Atlanta Musical Theatre Festival, and SheATL. Gretchensuarezpena.com.

ABOUT VILLAGE THEATRE

Based in Issaquah, Wash., with operations in Everett, Wash., Village Theatre is a leading producer of musical theatre in the Pacific Northwest. Producing entertaining, quality productions since 1979, Village Theatre has grown into one of the region's best-attended theatres. Through its Village Originals program, Village Theatre is nationally recognized for its contribution to the development of new musicals, having supported the creation of over 180 new works to date. Village Theatre also takes pride in nurturing tomorrow's audiences through its Youth Education programs, serving thousands of young people and their families annually.

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FOR EDITORS/PRODUCERS

WHAT: The Festival of New Musicals

Don't miss your chance to see the next big musical hit at Village Theatre's annual Festival of New Musicals! Join this theatrically packed weekend to enjoy stage readings of brand-new works from some of the nation's brightest musical theatre creators, presented in collaboration with some of the Seattle area's finest performers to create the future of America's most extraordinary art form.

Village Originals has launched more than 180 new musicals into the universe, sending them across the country, to Broadway, and worldwide. The Festival jumpstarted Broadway favorites like *Million Dollar Quartet* and *Next to Normal*.

WHERE:

Village Theatre
Francis J. Gaudette Theatre
303 Front Street N, Issaquah

WHEN:

August 2-4, 2024

TICKETS:

Free and open to the public
Seats must be reserved in advance

For ticketing information >> VillageTheatre.org/Festival

CONNECT WITH VILLAGE THEATRE

VillageTheatre.org

Facebook - [/VillageTheatre](https://www.facebook.com/VillageTheatre)

Instagram - [@village_theatre](https://www.instagram.com/village_theatre)

YouTube - [/villagetheatre1](https://www.youtube.com/villagetheatre1)

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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